



22ND MARINE EXPEDITIONARY UNIT RETURNS AFTER RECORD-LENGTH DEPLOYMENT

The Marines and Sailors of the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) are returning to their home bases and stations in North Carolina Feb. 2-4. Approximately 1,700 Marines and Sailors with 22nd MEU deployed aboard the Bataan Amphibious Ready Group on March 24, 2011 and spent more than 10 months afloat. This deployment is one of the longest on record for a Marine Corps unit. Typically, units deploy for six to seven months. The 22nd MEU supported operations in the U.S. European, African and Central Commands' area of responsibility. Highlights of their deployment include support to operations in Libya, training in



Djibouti, as well as conducting bilateral training with Spanish and Romanian Marines. "This has been an epic deployment," Col. Eric Steidl, commanding officer of the 22nd MEU, said in a statement. "Not just in terms of duration, but for flexibility and adaptability the amphibious forces provide the combatant commander."

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HEROES

FALLEN BROTHERS OF RCT-8 HONORED



Marines and Sailors from Regimental Combat Team 8 (RCT-8) held a remembrance ceremony on Jan. 25 to honor the 60 Marines, Sailors and Airmen who were killed in action. At the front of the room, a battlefield memorial displayed photos of each fallen service member, as well as combat boots, a rifle, a Kevlar helmet and identification tags. "Each could have found a way to avoid being in harm's way the day they were killed," said Col. Eric Smith during the remembrance ceremony. "They could have feigned an ankle sprain or simply asked to sit out the particular patrol. But that is not who we are as a service. We move toward the sound of guns, and we close with the enemy. We are gunfighters. The men we remember today epitomize our ethos. We respect them, we are proud of them and we loved them." A 21-gun salute and bagpipes playing "Amazing Grace" signaled the Marines and Sailors to give their individual respects to the fallen before the end of the ceremony.

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MAJOR AWARDED FOR EVICTING ENEMY IN AFGHANISTAN

Maj. Jamie P. Murphy, Wounded Warrior Regiment's future operations officer, was presented the Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V" device by his former commanding officer, Lt. Col. J.D. Harrill on Jan. 27. Murphy earned the Bronze Star for his actions in support of Operation Enduring Freedom while serving in Helmand province, Afghanistan, particularly following an improvised explosive device detonation. "With no regard for his safety, he ignored the threat of additional devices and directed the movement of the wounded from the blast area, directed the defense against a possible further attack, and executed casualty evacuations," reads the citation. "His efforts allowed the position to be established and materially contributed to the defeat of the insurgency as it validated the commitment of Marines to the Afghan elders and people. His decisive actions immediately following the blast turned a seeming enemy victory into a key defeat and that saw the enemy evicted from the area." Murphy attributed his medal to the support of his wife and family, the guidance of his leaders and the camaraderie of the Marines in his regiment, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines.

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INJURIES DON'T STOP WOUNDED WARRIORS



Always headstrong and committed to a cause, Sgt. Robert Skalitsky won't take no for an answer. The wounded warrior, who suffered concussions from two explosions while serving in Afghanistan, was determined to spend his weekend skiing at Wintergreen Resort, Va., on Jan. 30 despite his doctor's concerns. Skalitsky and 21 other wounded warriors participated in a weekend of snow sports as part of their



rehabilitation process. Under the watchful eye of instructors to prevent further injuries, some wounded warriors used traditional

skis and snowboards, while others zipped down the slopes on mono-skis and bi-skis. "It's mentally soothing. It's physically soothing," Skalitsky said. "It's ... just something everybody needs." The annual event began eight years ago, when Walter Reed Army Medical Center requested that Wintergreen Resort help wounded warriors stay active in spite of their injuries.

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NEWS

SANGIN: TRANSFORMING INSURGENT HOTBED INTO SAFE HAVEN



Local leaders and representatives of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan have made considerable progress in ensuring a brighter future in the Sangin district throughout the past year. With the help of Marines and Sailors with 2nd Marine Division (Forward), Afghan national security forces have transformed the formerly insurgent-controlled area into a more secure place for its residents. "Over the past five months, the situation in Sangin district is improving," said Afghan National

Army Lt. Col. Hazbullah, the commanding officer of 2nd Kandak, 2nd Brigade, 215th Corps. "We are moving toward development. Today, we have been able to gain the trust of the public. The people are confident that [security forces] are able to defend the property and honor of the people. The confidence and trust of the people is a result of the achievement of the security forces here." The Marines have gradually reduced their role to that of advisors, and the Afghan security forces have begun taking the forefront in leading security efforts. The decreased insurgent presence has allowed local leaders to focus on building roads and clinics, repairing electricity and expanding education opportunities.

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VMM-365'S LAST FLIGHT OF 2011



The last flight of Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 365's (VMM-365) in 2011 was also their last flight before their deployment. Prior to their departure, they conducted tests of every aircraft to ensure they were still in compliance with all safety and operation regulations. "This flight tests eight different aircraft," said Capt. Mark A. Stefanski, VMM-365 co-pilot. "We take them up and make sure they are in perfectly-good working order." Aircraft that haven't been flown in 30 days or more need to be tested before use,

and the squadrons conducting their own tests saves time and contributes to maintaining unit readiness. During the testing, 14 pilots and 14 crew chiefs flew eight MV-22B Ospreys from Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C. towards Wilmington, N.C., and back.

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SNIPER'S PRODIGY EVADES LIMELIGHT



Charles "Chuck" Mawhinney's career as a Marine sniper is one for the record books. During a 16-month tour in Vietnam, then-Sgt. Mawhinney broke the confirmed kill record as a scout sniper with 103 confirmed kills and 216 possible kills. After being diagnosed with combat fatigue, he returned to the U.S. to teach marksmanship at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., until he left the Corps in 1970. Following his military service, he worked for the U.S. Forest Service, yet he chose to keep his time in the Corps a secret. However, in the early 1990s, fellow Marine sniper Joseph T. Ward wrote "Dear Mom: A Sniper's Vietnam" and revealed Mawhinney's record. Once he

retired from his civilian job, Mawhinney spoke publicly about the role of the sniper, building a positive image of snipers as lifesavers on the battlefield. Today, he continues to serve the Corps at the Precision Weapons Shop, Weapons Training Battalion, Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va.

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LEARNING BY EXAMPLE: DRILL INSTRUCTOR SCHOOL AT PARRIS ISLAND



The image of the Marine Corps drill instructor is iconic: flawless uniform, wide-brimmed hat and sword at side, while shouting orders at recruits. Even drill instructors must start somewhere, and that somewhere is Drill Instructor School at Marine Corps Recruit Station Parris Island, S.C. "The future of the United States Marine Corps begins here," said a Marine at Parris Island. "The mission of Drill Instructor School is to further develop the knowledge, command presence, leadership, physical

condition and instructional ability of selected non-commissioned officers and staff non-commissioned officers in order to successfully perform the duties of a drill instructor. In short, we train the trainers." The school's instructors train the drill-instructors-in-training to a specific standard so that when those Marines become drill instructors, they can train their own recruits to that same standard. But Drill Instructor School is not just about turning Marines into drill instructors; it is about improving as a Marine and a leader.

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NEW DOD INITIATIVES BOLSTER BATTLE AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT

On Jan. 18, the Department of Defense (DoD) released a series of initiatives to curb sexual assault across the entire military. "Our men and women in uniform put their lives on the line every day to try to keep



America safe, and we have a moral duty to keep them safe from those who would attack their dignity and their honor," Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said in a release. The initiatives include the establishment of a DoD sexual assault advocate certification program, the expansion of victim support to include military spouses and adult



dependents, increasing training funds for investigators and judge advocates, and focusing on prevention and better leadership training. Specific to the Corps, Uniform Victim Advocates (UVAs) are available to offer confidential assistance to service members dealing with sexual assault. "Sexual assault is a very traumatic and personal thing for a victim," said Staff Sgt. Racheal Benezette, UVA for Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, N.C. "Victims generally don't want anyone knowing about their situation that is not on a need to know basis. However, the UVA is here if they are seeking help and need someone to lean on and walk them through the process." Last year, military officials received 3,191 official reports of sexual assault, but Panetta estimated that the actual number, which would include unreported incidents, is closer to 19,000.

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Also Read: Panetta Announces Initiatives Targeting Sexual Assault

ADVANCE TO THE NEXT LINKS: MARINE CORPS FAMILY TEAM BUILDING OFFERS ADVANCED LINKS FOR SPOUSES



The first Advanced Lifestyles, Insights, Networking, Knowledge and Skills (LINKS) class of the year took place aboard Marine Corps Base Hawaii on Jan. 24. The class was coordinated by Marine Corps Family Team Building and open to Marines, Sailors and their families. Elements of the class included lectures, hands-on activities, games and a mini resource fair.

"Networking, research and being proactive are key ingredients to a successful transition out of the service," said Jeff Esposito, the Transition Assistance Program manager and a guest speaker at the LINKS event. Students were able to get a variety of in-

depth information themselves from the sources available. Advanced LINKS for spouses is offered on a quarterly basis throughout the year.

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FACE OF DEFENSE: DEPLOYED MARINE APPLIES JUNIOR ROTC LESSONS

Sgt. Xuchill Laput, a regional site manager with the 2nd Marine Logistics Group's 9th Engineer Support Battalion on Forward Operating Base Whitehouse, Afghanistan, always knew he would join the military. His interest in the military was solidified in high school by his Junior ROTC instructor, Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer Mark Williams.

Laput credits Williams with being a strong male figure in his life, providing sage counsel and supporting him even in difficult times. Now as a bulk fuel specialist

overseas, Laput says he has carried forward the idea that everyone should wake up in the morning with a goal to do the right thing. He and his Marines go through an extensive checklist every day checking their equipment, something that does not necessarily have to be done on a daily basis, but the habit is part of his work ethic. "The Marine Corps has taught me to make do with what you have," he said. "Our officer in charge takes care of us, so I'm going to take care of all the Marines [at each site]. In turn, they will take care of the fuel farms."

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MARINE'S CROSS COUNTRY RIDE



Tim Tuomey understands the sacrifices service members make to protect American freedom, especially after serving with the 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion, 2nd Marine Division more than two decades ago. While on a climbing trip in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, he experienced what he called an "awakening" where he fully realized that



what was truly important to him were the Marines and Sailors protecting his freedom. He organized Operation Awakening, in which he aims to "make a difference in someone else's life" by riding his bike 3,168 miles across the United States. He

will leave Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center in Bridgeport, Calif., on April 12 and arrive at his former home base of 2nd Marine Division in Jacksonville, N.C., approximately 70 days later. Tuomey plans to raise money and awareness through his ride for The Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund, which provides financial support for ill and injured service members and their families.

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AGENCIES CREATE DATABASE TO PROTECT TROOPS, THWART SWINDLERS



On Jan. 25, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau announced that it is partnering with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to stop scam businesses trying to sell products to service members. The businesses sell electronics and cars, among other items, with hidden conditions and high interest rates that can become a financial nightmare. The bureau developed a national database, Repeat Offenders Against the Military (ROAM), to share with state and federal law enforcement. The database "is about being effective, efficient and responsive" in prosecuting scam artists, FTC Commissioner Julie Brill said. Members of the military are particularly at risk to scams because of their young age, independence, reliable paychecks

and lack of financial experience. Last year, the FTC received more than 17,000 complaints of military-targeted financial scams.

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EVENTS

REGISTRATION OPEN FOR THE MARINE CORPS HISTORIC HALF



Online registration is now open for the Marine Corps Historic Half Marathon, which will be held at 7 a.m. on May 20 in Fredericksburg, Va. The Half Marathon, organized by the Marine Corps Marathon, is celebrating its fifth anniversary this spring. All who sign up will receive a medal, t-shirt and a year-long subscription to the Fredericksburg Area Museum and Cultural Center and an artistic rendering of the 13.1-mile course. The registration fee is \$65 until March 14, after which it will increase to \$80. Teams of two, with each runner completing 6.55 miles, can register for \$90.

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